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U.S. DISTRICT COURT E.D.N.Y.

★ FEB 28 2008 ★

BROOKLYN OFFICE

To: The Honorable Jack Weinstein  
Fax: 718-613-2527

Re: Court case regarding Mark Twain, IS 239

From: Nancy Yabroudi, parent. My younger son graduated from Mark Twain IS 239 in June of 2007. He was in the computer talent program for three years.

We live in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, which is in District 20. My older son attended Dyker Intermediate School in our local district, graduating in 2003. He received a magnificent education there. We decided, however, not to place the second child in that local school because we felt that the Superintendent's (gifted) program there had deteriorated.

We compared many private and public schools. We investigated Mark Twain because it was a magnet school with a wonderful reputation for excellence. We would not have looked into this school except for that excellent reputation. The school is far away from our home. It was an unknown entity to us. We would have to pay out-of-pocket for private bus transportation. Our son would have to spend extra time commuting. The location was in a neighborhood we heard was quite unsafe. Extracurricular activities were precluded due to the distance and the bus schedule.

In spite of all these issues, we chose Mark Twain because it came highly recommended, because the computer talent magnet program offered our child a very unique learning opportunity, and because we were disappointed with the options in our local neighborhood (in spite of an earlier very positive experience). We chose a public school not because we couldn't afford private tuition; we chose Mark Twain for its excellence. We were quite happy with our experience there. Along with a fine education, we found an astoundingly diverse student population—that was an education in and of itself for our child.

Mark Twain is a school of devoted people. Many, many, many staff members and parents have put their hearts into making that school something special. The years of innovative contributions built a basic school into something the public system couldn't achieve alone. I worry that your changes will damage this school as I saw happen in District 20.

Beware. I know personally many parents with children in the gifted programs who can and will withdraw from the public school system. I don't care how much money is thrown at the problem of raising low scores; if the school system loses the high achievers, the averages will plummet.

There will always be disgruntled parents who find the gifted programs an easy target. What I can tell you is that the system must respond to the very real needs of gifted children. The public school system must satisfy the "appetites" of gifted students or the system will be failing them.

Mark Twain is an excellent school. Be very, very careful before you change the formula or deny it funding. Don't interfere with a school that works.

Respectfully,

Nancy Yabroudi

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72-cv-1041